

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN JORDAN
INFO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 4155

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E.O. 11652 : N/A
TAGS : PINR, BA, JO
SUBJECT : NEW BAHRAINI AMBASSADOR TO JORDAN

1. GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL SEND SALIM AL-ABSI AS ITS NEW AMBASSADOR TO JORDAN. AL-ABSI, A WELL-KNOWN FIGURE IN BAHRAINI SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CIRCLES, HAS BEEN DIRECTOR OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS. MEMBER OF A ONCE-WEALTHY, STILL SOCIALLY PROMINENT, PEARLING FAMILY WITH LONG AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE RULING FAMILY, AL-ABSI IS SUNNI AND MARRIED.

2. ABOUT FIFTY, AL-ABSI IS PHYSICALLY LARGE FOR A BAHRAINI BUT IS DISFIGURED BY WALL-EYES, ONE OF WHICH MAY ALSO HAVE A CATARACT GROWTH. HE IS NONETHELESS A SOCIAL SWINGER, OFTEN SEEN IN THE COMPANY OF WESTERN WOMEN AND A REGULAR AT MOST GULF AIR STEWARDESSES/ELITE BAHRAINI THURSDAY NIGHT PARTIES. HIS OWN FAMILY IS UNKNOWN TO THE EMBASSY, ALTHOUGH HE HAS A BAHRAINI WIFE AND SEVERAL CHILDREN. THE ELDEST SON IS FAISAL, THUS FRIENDS CALL AL-ABSI, ABU FAISAL. TWO OF AL-ABSI'S YOUNGER BROTHERS ARE IN PROMINENT POSITIONS IN THE BAHRAIN DEFENCE FORCE AND THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY.

3. AS OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO IS THE DAY-
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TO-DAY POWER WIELDER IN THE GOB. AL-ABSI HAS A REPUTATION FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY. HIS BOSS, SHAIKH KHALIFA, THINKS HIGHLY OF AL-ABSI AND THE APPOINTMENT TO JORDAN IS CONSIDERED A REWARD FOR LOYAL AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE. PRIOR TO HIS ENTERING GOVERNMENT SERVICE, AL-ABSI WAS THE CHIEF TRANSLATOR OF THE BAHRAIN PETROLEUM COMPANY (BAPCO), A POSITION HE HELD FOR MANY YEARS. BESIDES ENGLISH AND ARABIC,

HE IS REPORTEDLY FLUENT AND LITERATE IN FARSI AND URDU.

4. COMMENT: IN OUR DEALINGS WITH AL-ABSI, WE HAVE FOUND HIM EFFICIENT AND RESPONSIVE IN FACILITATING OUR ACCESS TO THE PRIME MINISTER. WE HAVE HAD LITTLE OCCASION TO DISCUSS MUCH OF SUBSTANCE WITH HIM, BUT HAVE FOUND HIM GRACIOUS, IF NOT PARTICULARLY GARRULOUS.

5. THE BAHRAINIS VALUE THEIR LINKS WITH JORDAN. ALTHOUGH NOT CONSIDERED "COUSINS" LIKE THE SAUDS AND SABAHS, KING HUSSAIN AND CROWN PRINCE HASSAN ARE HELD IN ESTEEM BY THE RULING FAMILY (OR MOST MEMBERS OF IT ANYWAY). JORDAN HAS BEEN HELPFUL WITH SECONDING POLICE/INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY OFFICERS OF HIGH QUALITY. SOME BAHRAIN DEFENCE FORCE OFFICERS TRAIN IN JORDAN. SEVERAL BAHRAINI STUDENTS STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AMMAN. TRADE AND COMMERCE BETWEEN THE TWO STATES IS MINIMAL; IN 1975 AND 1976 IT AMOUNTED TO \$100,000 AND \$140,000 RESPECTIVELY, MOSTLY CITRUS AND OTHER FRUITS.

6. IF AL-ABSI WARMS TO THIS NEW JOB, EMBASSY AMMAN MAY FIND HIM A USEFUL AND POSSIBLY WELL-INFORMED COLLEAGUE. AL-ABSI EXPECTS TO ARRIVE IN AMMAN IN EARLY TO MID-FEBRUARY. CLUVERIUS

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